Surviving Covid-19 with Smarter Meetings

Most countries around the world are preparing emergency lock-down legislation, have enacted it or are already implementing it. That means separation. **And isolation.**

Yet, we still have to continue running our organisations? Getting access to team members. Using their knowledge, expertise and insights. Ensuring they don't feel completely cut off – but keeping them safe. How do we do this?

We need to embrace solutions that have been around for some time – but just not widely implemented. There are lots of options out there – the trick is to choose wisely, and to implement quickly.

I have attached a short summary of the issues – and the tools available (along with a handy checklist, adapted for these tools).

In practice, my preferred route is a combination of **Zoom** (I find it better than Skype) and **MeetingSphere** (be careful: you do need both).

Not only will this combination compensate for the loss of face-to-face meetings – it will make your meetings vastly more effective:

- Ensuring all voices are heard (not just the dominant ones)
- Improving decision making
- Building team morale and mutual support
- Making much more effective use of time
- Providing detailed documentation of the meeting (and agreed actions) instantly

Here are some examples of how I am using it:

- Helping a team make a difficult decision about terminating a Programme
- Running a virtual board strategy day (including separate (virtual) breakout rooms)
- Delivering a virtual training session (including virtual classroom exercises)
- Facilitating virtual C-suite decisions
- Supporting a Project Management Review meeting
- Helping a Board keep up to date on unfolding developments – and allowing them to exercise their responsibilities as board members

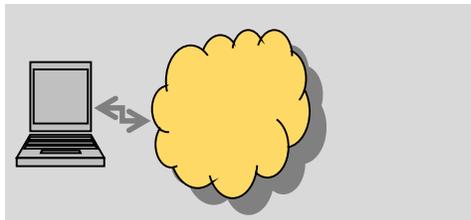Stay safe.

Surviving Covid-19 – with Smarter Meetings

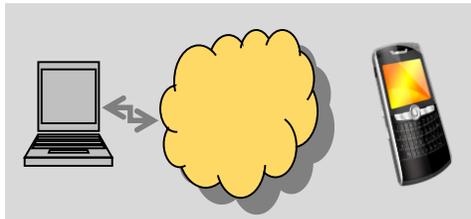## Traditional Meetings

Experience reveals lots of problems with traditional meetings:

Self-Censorship   Personal Prejudice   Blind Loyalty

Cognitive Bias   Arbitrary Priorities   Defective Decision Making

Incomplete record of meeting/actions   Bad outcomes

## Covid-19 Meetings

Different Time / Different Place

Same Time / Different Place

Social distancing and self-isolation force new thinking / opportunities:

- Reconnecting effectively with separated colleagues
- Ensuring every voice gets heard
- Energising the flow of ideas through "parallel working"
- Generating more ideas, inputs and contributions
- Enabling people to say what is really on their mind
- Saving time and eliminating unnecessary work
- Bringing accountability and transparency to decision-making
- Reassuring colleagues and delivering superior results

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Surviving Covid-19 – with Smarter Meetings
(delivering far better results, in a fraction of the time – fully documented)

Post-Covid-19 Meetings →
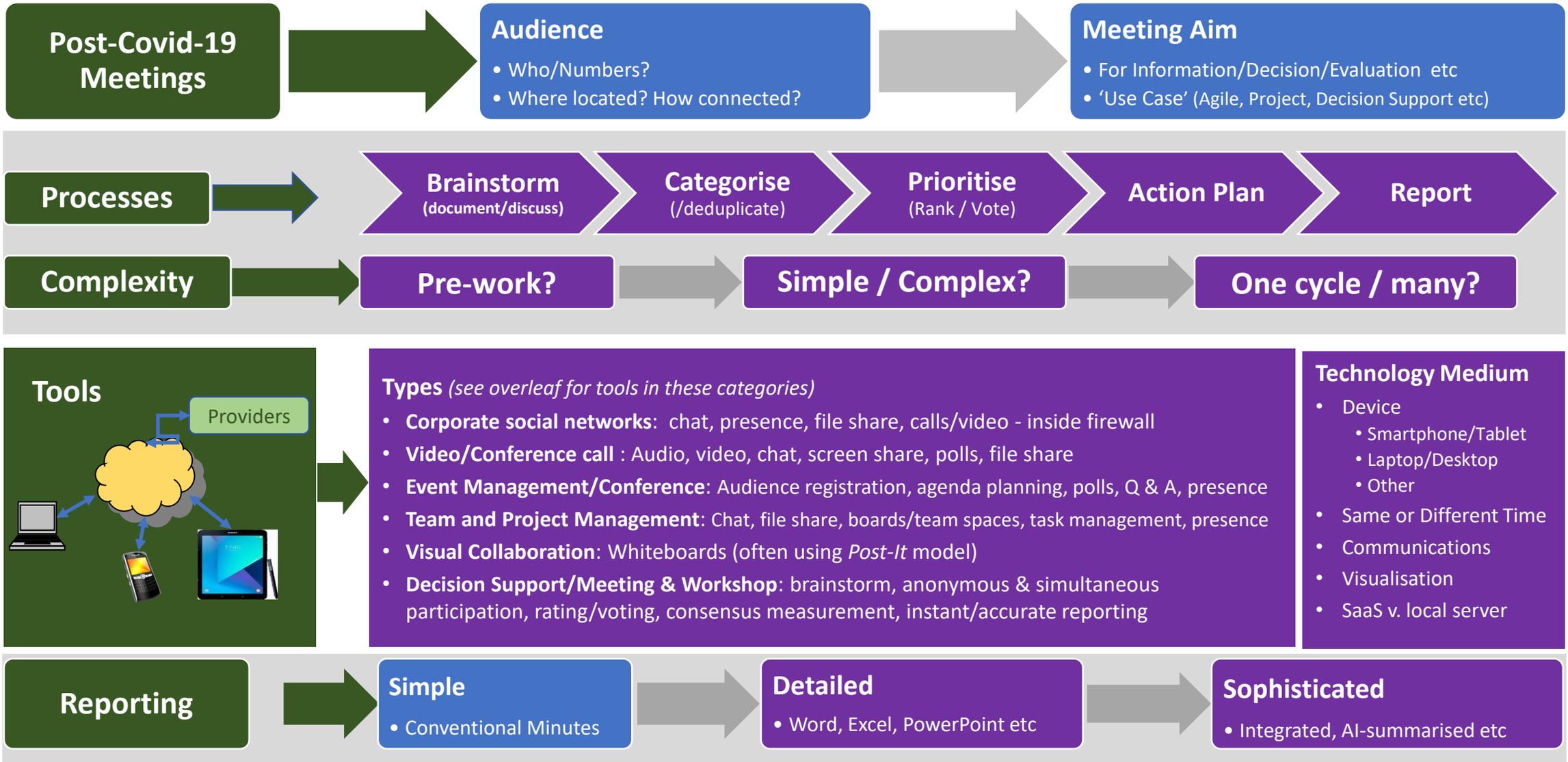
Audience
- Who/Numbers?
- Where located? How connected?

→

Meeting Aim
- For Information/Decision/Evaluation etc
- 'Use Case' (Agile, Project, Decision Support etc)

Processes →

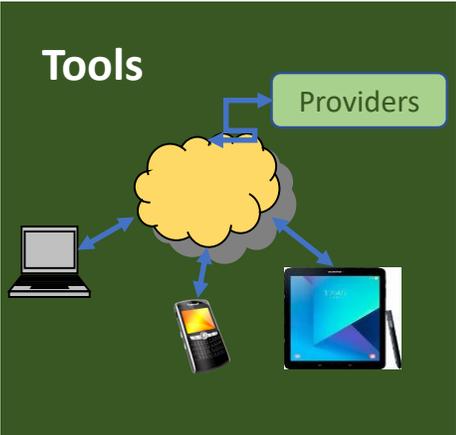**Brainstorm** (document/discuss) › **Categorise** (/deduplicate) › **Prioritise** (Rank / Vote) › **Action Plan** › **Report**

Complexity →

Pre-work? → **Simple / Complex?** → **One cycle / many?**

Tools

Providers

Types *(see overleaf for tools in these categories)*
- **Corporate social networks**: chat, presence, file share, calls/video - inside firewall
- **Video/Conference call** : Audio, video, chat, screen share, polls, file share
- **Event Management/Conference**: Audience registration, agenda planning, polls, Q & A, presence
- **Team and Project Management**: Chat, file share, boards/team spaces, task management, presence
- **Visual Collaboration**: Whiteboards (often using *Post-It* model)
- **Decision Support/Meeting & Workshop**: brainstorm, anonymous & simultaneous participation, rating/voting, consensus measurement, instant/accurate reporting

Technology Medium
- Device
  - Smartphone/Tablet
  - Laptop/Desktop
  - Other
- Same or Different Time
- Communications
- Visualisation
- SaaS v. local server

Reporting →

Simple
- Conventional Minutes

→

Detailed
- Word, Excel, PowerPoint etc

→

Sophisticated
- Integrated, AI-summarised etc

Surviving Covid-19 – with Smarter Meeting Design*

Have you:	Benefits of using collaboration solutions
• identified the purpose of the meeting? (and that you really need one? or would information sharing, 'asynchronously' suffice instead?))	• readymade templates for different types of meeting (e.g. for information, for discussion, for design, for decision-making, for evaluation, for action etc) • processes for specific use cases (e.g. Team and Project Management, Agile, Decision Support, Meeting evaluation etc.)
• developed a preliminary agenda/session plan?	• dedicated meeting planning tools • session design by expert facilitators which accelerate design of highly effective meetings
• selected the right participants and assigned responsibilities?	• scheduling tools/Calendar and Meeting Planning tools
• decided where and when to hold the meeting	• potential for different types of meetings ("Same time" or "Different time" collaboration) • flexibility, especially for colleagues working at home/self-isolating
• confirmed availability of the virtual space/associated tools?	• SaaS tools which operate on highly secure/highly reliable platforms
• sent the invitation? (and followed up to confirm attendance, identify issues)?	• scheduling tools / Calendars
• sent the agenda to key participants and stakeholders?	• many tools can be easily used without the need for outside assistance. For complex cases, process design by an expert facilitator can deliver superior results to traditional meetings, in a fraction of the time
• send details of advance preparation?	• brainstorming and voting tools which ensure participants prepare properly in advance
• chosen the decision-making process that will be used? (majority vote, group consensus, or many other types)	• a huge variety of tools provide a much richer array of techniques and eliminate most of the shortcomings of traditional meetings
• arranged for and tested any required equipment/tools?	• SaaS tools typically which offer very high reliability
• prepared yourself (prepared materials, reviewed others' materials)?	• (prep work always has to be done!)
• decided how to record the meeting and any actions agreed?	• special purpose tools offer a variety of recording methods (including 'instant reporting', AI interpretation of audio recordings and more)

*Adapted from "A Checklist for Planning Your Next Big Meeting", Harvard Business Review, 26 March 2015

Surviving Covid-19 – with Smart Collaboration Tools
(Ctrl+Click on name to go to website)

bob**SEMPLE**

Preferred choice for conferencing: **Zoom**

Preferred choice for smarter meetings: **MeetingSphere**

Corporate Social Networks

Visual Collaboration

MURAL · GroupMap · Definitive Pro™ · nureva · Stormboard · Howspace · MeetingSphere® · slack · iObeya · miro · Yammer · glasscubes · klaxoon · Yabbu · thoughtexchange · ThinkTank · STORMZ · glasscubes · monday.com · LUCID · hub · Basecamp · Trello · MEETINGSENSE

Decision support/meeting & workshops

huddle · Synthetron · zoom · POWERNOODLE BETTER QUALITY DECISIONS · Microsoft Teams · Cloverpop · CreativeHuddle · Blackboard · R · WEDO · fuze · **TEAM and Project Management** · ZOHO · OnBoard Board Management Software · sli.do · meeTinG360 Meeting Management Software · Quip · Sparkup · join me · glisser · Meetings 360 · Mentimeter · WebEx · Whova · **Event Management/Conference** · eventmobi · interprefy · eventbrite · BlueJeans · doubledutch · cvent · aventri

Video/Conference Call

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